

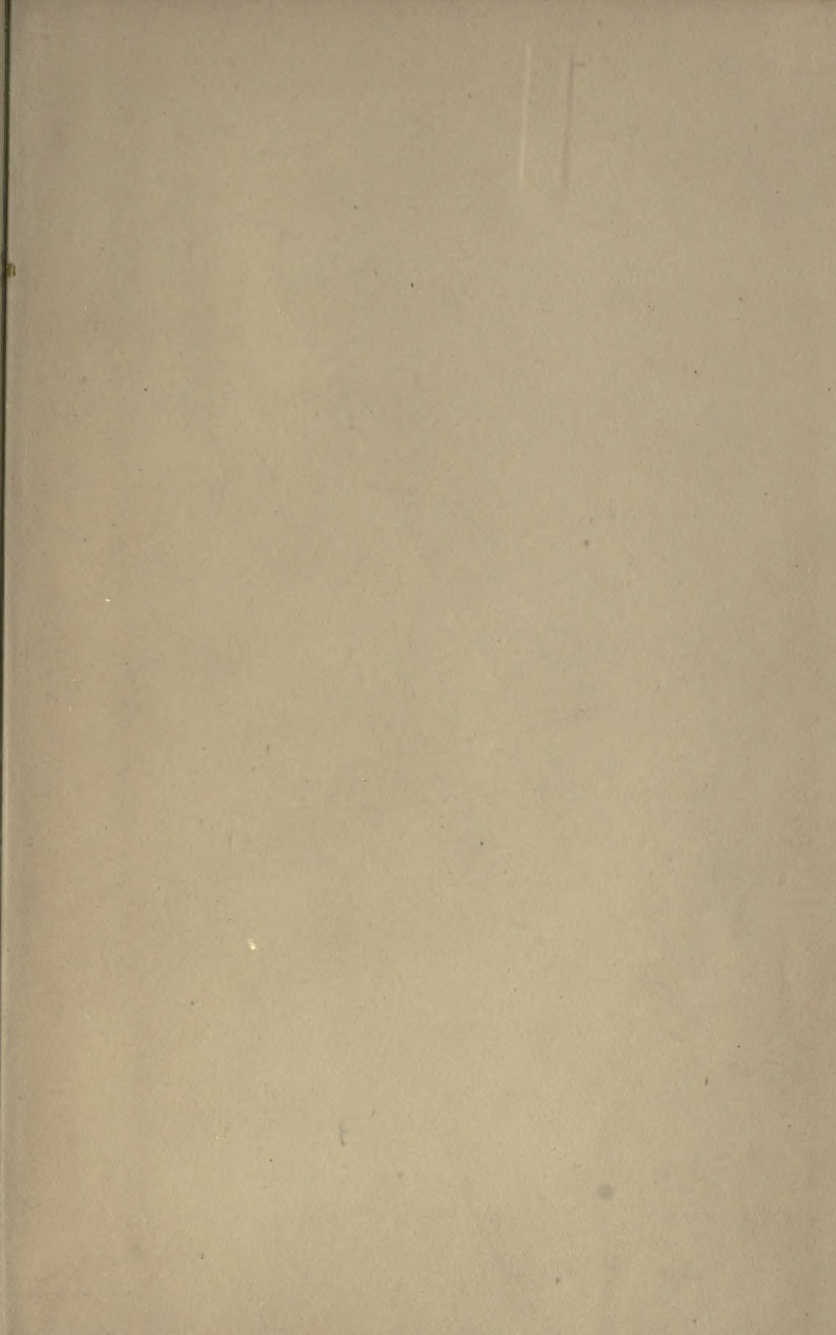



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The Angel and The Star

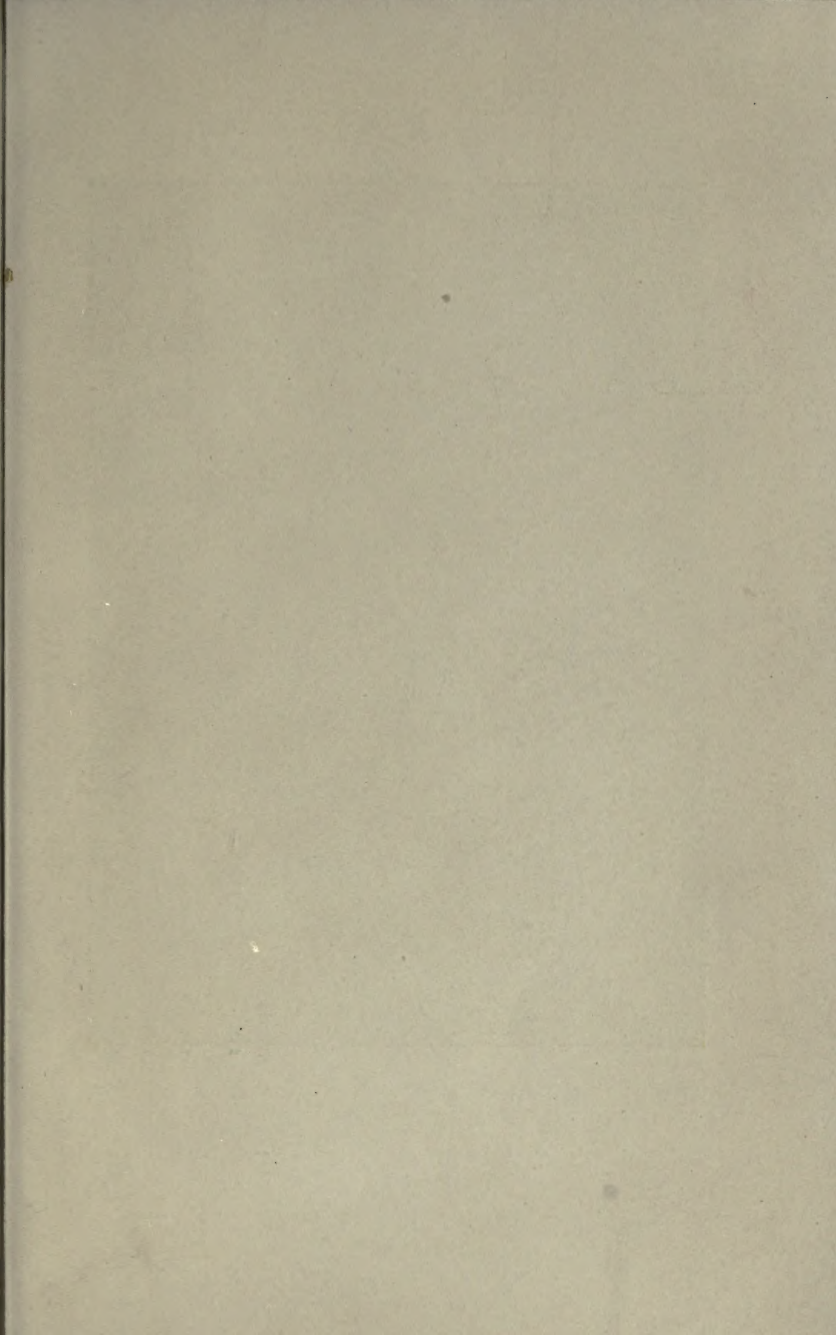
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Page Twenty-six.

"DOWN THIS QUIVERING PATHWAY MYRIADS OF SHINING
ONES STREAMED."



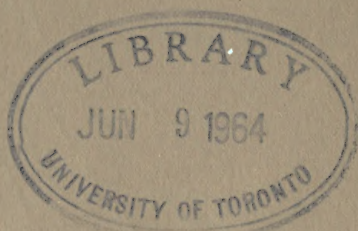
The Angel and The Star

Ralph Connor

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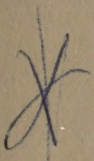
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TO MY BELOVED PEOPLE OF ST.
STEPHEN'S WHO SO LOYALLY BEAR
WITH ME AND PRAY FOR ME AND WORK
WITH ME IN THE KING'S SERVICE

THE ILLUSTRATIONS

The Angel

"DOWN THIS QUIVERING PATHWAY MYRIADS OF SHINING ONES STREAMED."

"HIS WIFE, ALSO OF THIS ROYAL LINE, WAITED UPON HER LORD AT HIS EVENING MEAL."

"BROTHER," HE ENTREATED . . . "I BESEECH THEE HEAR ME AND GRANT US SOME QUIET SPOT."

"LONG AFTER THE SHEPHERD LAY WITH HIS FELLOW WATCHERS ON THE HILLSIDE."

"WITH OUTSTRETCHED ARMS HIS WIFE CAME TO HIM, DREADING HIS AGONY, FEARING FOR HIS FAITH."

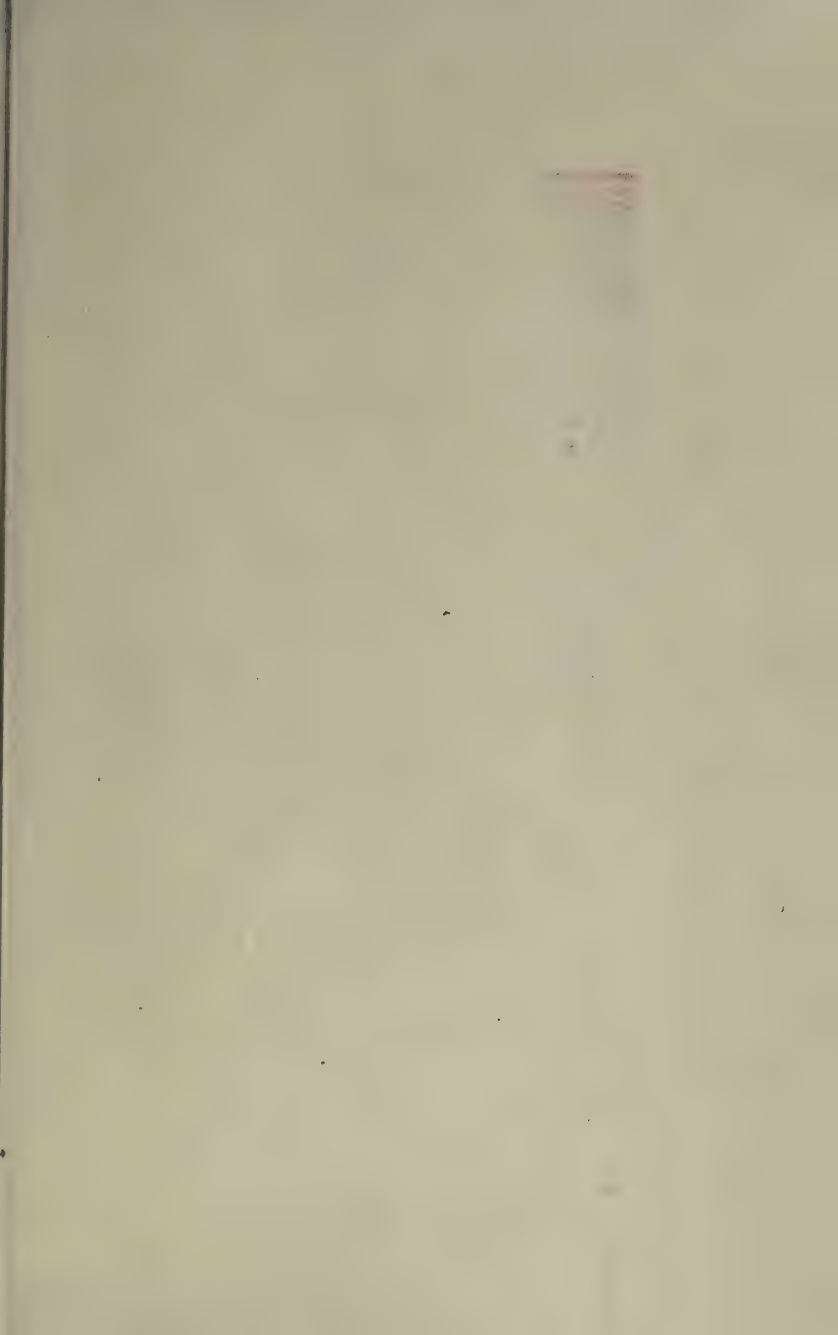
The Star

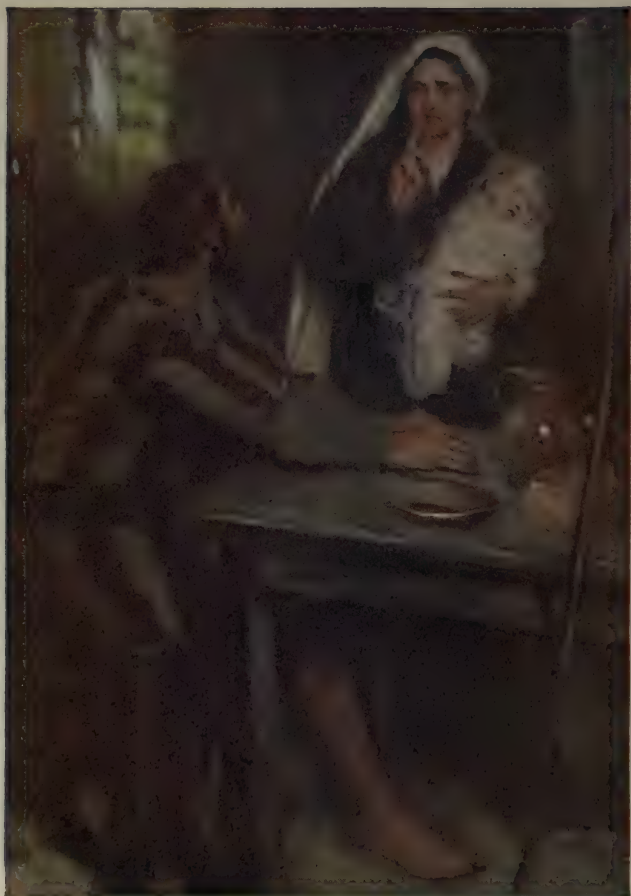
"NO NEED OF GUIDE, FOR ONCE FREE OF THE CITY STEADILY BURNED BEFORE THEM A WONDROUS STAR."

"CAN WE FIND ONE TO PRESENT US TO THE KING?" HE ASKED IN THE HEBREW TONGUE.

"AND NOW WE HAVE DONE OUR HOMAGE AND OFFERED OUR GIFTS."

"JEHOVAH THY GOD BLESS THEE," HE SAID, HIS VOICE VIBRATING AND DEEP.





Page Eight.

"HIS WIFE, ALSO OF THIS ROYAL LINE, WAITED UPON HER
LORD AT HIS EVENING MEAL."

THE ANGEL



HE day's work was done in Bethlehem. The sound of hammer and of loom, the cries of hawkers and of traders, the noises of the bustling crowds that thronged the tortuous streets were stilled. With the sunset, rest had come to the workers—not to all. In the little house of the Chief Shepherd in charge of the sacrificial flocks there was a stir, for he was about to depart for his nightly watch on the plains below the city.

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Of the royal line of David, he bore in his face and carried in his mien the marks of his noble blood. His wife, also of this royal line, waited upon her lord at his evening meal, pausing now and then to hush the feeble wail of the babe she carried with her to and fro. Upon her husband's face a heavy shadow lay, for his heart was hot and his spirit bitter within him. Long before, his independent carriage and proud spirit had drawn the persecuting wrath of Herod, for no one of noble blood was safe from the fierce suspicions and savage jealousy of that Idumean usurper. His only safety had been in submission, bitter to his

The Angel and The Star

soul ; and ever and again the servile courtiers of that monstrous, blood-reeking tyrant found much pleasure and some profit in harrying still further the humbled man. By the cloud upon his face his gentle wife knew that some fresh outrage had been done that day, and with wise and loving words she strove to lure his mind to the serene heights of faith and hope. She talked of the gathering of their tribe for the Roman taxing into their ancient royal city, and of the glories of their past. The shadow only deepened upon her husband's face. Well she knew his thought.

The Angel and The Star

“Jehovah reigneth,” she quoted.

“Verily the signs of His Kingdom are few,” he replied bitterly.

“He shall judge His people with righteousness,” again she quoted.

“Righteousness!” he cried. “There is none in this land any more. The wicked walk on every side when the vilest men are exalted.”

“Hush,” she said, gently closing the door.

“Righteousness!” he exclaimed bitterly again.

“Not so loud, I entreat thee. The Roman guard hath just gone by.”

“The Roman? I fear him not. He is just at heart. The Roman lion

The Angel and The Star

fears not the strong, and seizes what he desires. But these jackals of Herod plunder and harry the weak and broken of the flock. To-day they made fresh demands and, remembering thee, I smote them not, but paid my toll, while they taunted me 'Where is thy God?' " Then after long silence he burst forth, " Lord Jehovah how long? Wilt Thou be angry forever? How long wilt Thou hear the bitter cry of Thy people? Pour out Thine indignation upon them. Let Thy burning anger take hold upon them. Let their habitation be desolate. Let them be blotted out of the book of the living." His voice

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rose and fell in the terrible chant of the Hebrew poet-king of old.

“Why didst thou cease?” she chided gently. “Doth not the Word follow ‘For Jehovah heareth the poor. God will save Jerusalem and will build the cities of Zion.’ And again, ‘He shall judge the poor, He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor.’”

“Will He, indeed, break Herod and his might in pieces, with great Rome behind him?” he asked, rising to take his staff and his cloak as well, for the nights were chill.

“Yea, verily, for the mouth of Je-

The Angel and The Star

hovah hath spoken it. The Angel of the Covenant is mighty," she replied.

"Angel?" he questioned. "Priest Ezra says there are none, and I confess I never saw any."

A quick anger flashed in her face. "It is written, 'Thou shalt not speak evil of thy rulers,' but the Sadducee I believe not. Did not thê Angel speak with Abraham our father, and with Jacob at Bethel, and with Moses the man of God at the Bush, and with Gideon, and with the holy prophets?"

"That is all far away from us to-day," he replied gloomily.

"But Jehovah is near us," she answered quickly. "Nay, do not yield

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to unbelief. See," with a swift change of tone and holding up her babe, "he seems stronger, he smiles at thee. Jehovah keep him safe!"

"For what?" he asked bitterly, but he laid down the staff and took the babe. Reverently lifting his eyes he invoked blessing, "Jehovah grant thee peace," and gave him to his mother. But the babe, to his father's joy, clung fast, till with gentle force the mother took it from his arms.

"Come to thy mother, child. Thy father must go to his sheep, to ward off the fierce beasts and the fierce robbers. And indeed, I often fear for thee, my husband, till I cannot sleep."



Page Thirty-two.

"WITH OUTSTRETCHED ARMS HIS WIFE CAME TO HIM,
DREADING HIS AGONY, FEARING FOR HIS FAITH."

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“What! what!” said her husband, his gloomy mood passing. “What of thy faith now? What of thy God and His angels?”

“Ah yes, thou hast well said. ‘He shall give His angels charge over thee.’ I will not fear.”

“Angels again!”

“Yes, ‘He shall give His angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways,’ and so to His angels I confide thee.”

“One angel at least I know, nay two,” he said, kissing his babe again.

“Go, haste. I shall watch thee down the hill. And His angels guard thee safe.”

The Angel and The Star

She watched till he turned from the street into the path that led far out on to the sloping hills lying dim and distant, then turned with a sigh to her little home, her sick babe in her arms.

“ Surely the day of the Lord cannot long be delayed,” she said to herself.

Meantime her husband, striding down the highway that led out into the country, saw before him a group of travellers, with their beasts, noisily bargaining and chaffering for a lodging. In vain they pled. In vain being refused, they poured maledictions upon the keeper of the inn.

“ What would ye, my brethren,” he protested. “ Can I make what is not ?

The Angel and The Star

My house is filled from floor to roof. The courtyard only is left, and the stable."

"Thy courtyard! But it is better than the street," they grumbled and poured in.

Two had stood apart from the rude crowd, a man and a woman, the man in sore distress.

"Brother," he entreated, drawing near to the innkeeper, "in the name of Jehovah, in the name of our father David, I beseech thee hear me and grant us some quiet spot, not for myself but for the woman, who is as you see."

The shepherd, noting the woman,

The Angel and The Star

whose face was turned quickly away, paused. That face by its sweet dignity, touched with anxiety and fear of her coming anguish, arrested him.

“Man, have I not said—” shouted the distracted innkeeper, but catching sight of that gentle face he stopped abruptly. “There is no place for wife and child of my own to lay their head. But,” glancing again at that pathetic figure of dignity and coming sorrow, “there is—” once more he hesitated, “the stable—and fresh fodder—at least it is quiet.”

Quickly the woman turned to her husband and whispered a word, then bending her head with unspeakable

The Angel and The Star

grace she murmured, "The Lord give thee peace. The God of our father David bless thee," and moved towards the stable, followed by her husband.

The innkeeper stood silent with bared and bent head while she passed, awed by the dignity of that gentle face, and touched by her need.

"Now may the God of Abraham and Sarah grant thee mercy," he murmured, looking after them.

"Who are they?" asked the shepherd reverently for he too had uncovered his head as they passed.

"Nay," answered the innkeeper testily, "dost think I know every traveller from the north country?"

The Angel and The Star

But I must go and make what comfort I can for them."

Long after the shepherd lay with his fellow watchers on the hillside, the vision of that face with its gentle dignity and its foreshadow of pain, kept coming to him. He would have gone home to his wife for her help, but he dared not leave his place. But the thought of the woman haunted him, the music of her voice in blessing still sounded in his ears, "Jehovah give thee peace." Was there anything in it? Again his old harassing doubts and his bitter thoughts came hard upon him, forbidding the sleep that had fallen upon

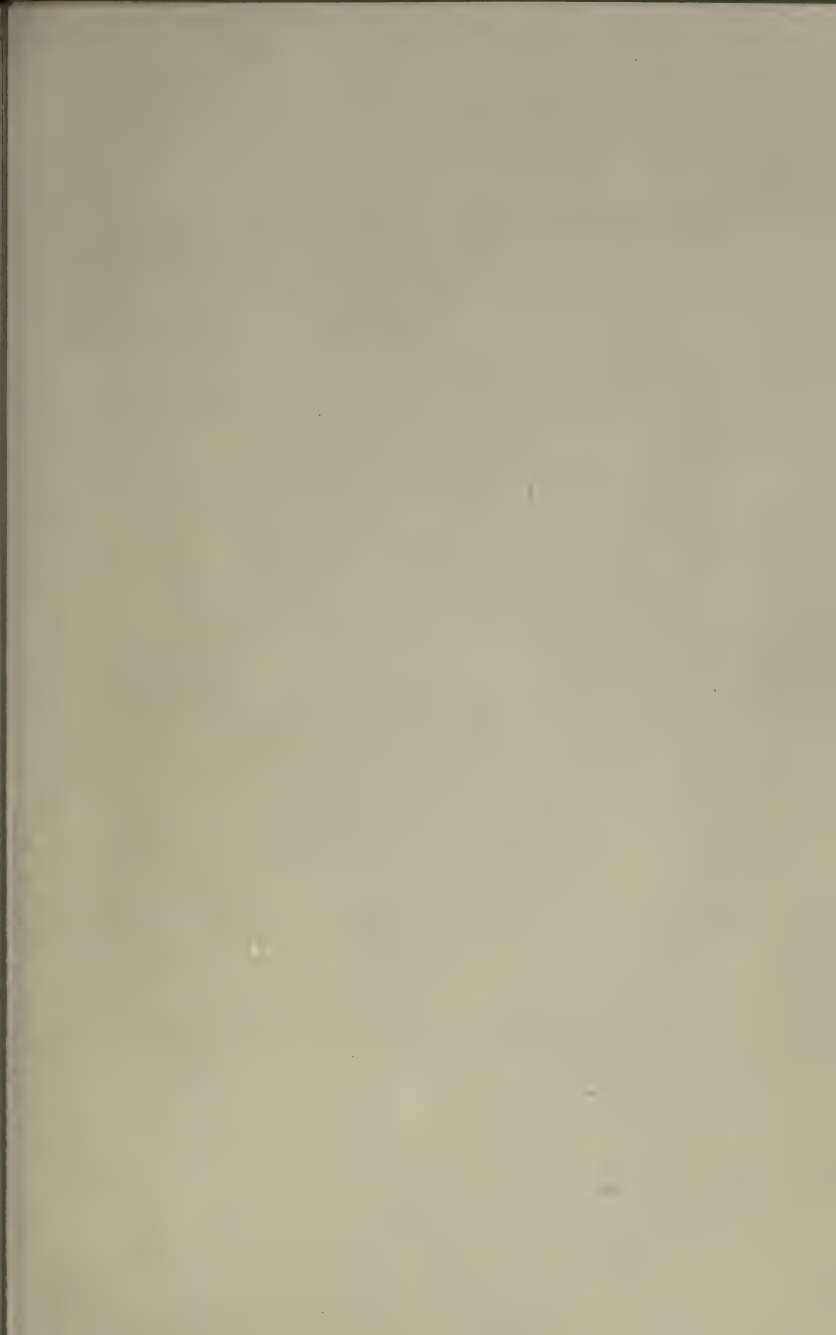
The Angel and The Star

his fellow watchers, while through his heart echoed the ancient taunt "Where is thy God?" Was Jehovah in very deed keeping watch over Israel? How then of the Roman oppression, the degradation of the ancient Throne of David in the pagan Herod, the barrenness of the Pharisaic legalism, the worldly scepticism of the Sadducee?

Darker and stiller grew the night. He could hear the breathing of the sheep near him, the lonely cry of the jackal from the canyon. Gradually under the tranquil silence of the night his troubled heart grew quiet. The song of his great ancestor, him-

The Angel and The Star

self a shepherd, came to him, "Jehovah is my shepherd I shall not want," and "He shall give His angels charge." He thought of his wife's faith. The angels might well enough be about her. The face of the woman in the street so near her sorrow came to him. In that face he found the same suggestion of the presence and peace of Jehovah. Through the great past of his people his mind travelled. The great men of his race were great only as they held to Jehovah. Yes, and even in the darkest days there had been those who had dared to believe in Jehovah and to wait for Him. He thought of Jacob at Bethlehem, Moses





Page Twenty.

"LONG AFTER THE SHEPHERD LAY WITH HIS FELLOW
WATCHERS ON THE HILLSIDE."

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in the desert far south yonder with his flocks, of David hunted by his enemy and again by his own son, of Israel in Babylonian exile, yet Jehovah had never quite forsaken, but in the darkest hour the Angel of the Covenant had comforted them. Jehovah had redeemed His people. Might it not be again? Never had darker days fallen for the people of God, their land under a foreign yoke, their people torn by religious dissensions, their religious leaders fiercely fighting each other for place and power or consumed with lust for gold. He bowed his face between his knees and cried out into the night "Oh Lord how

The Angel and The Star

long? Wilt Thou be angry forever? Hast Thou forgotten to be gracious?"

As if in answer, a great calm fell upon him. A sudden faith subdued his soul into stillness. "I will remember the years of the Most High. I will remember Thy wonders of old." Jehovah seemed very near.

He rose and stood with his face wrapped in his mantle. His very soul seemed to be listening for the foot-falls of God. All Nature seemed to be aware of that Great Presence. About him he fancied he could hear the breathing of the hills, the heart-beat of the night, the music of the stars.

The Angel and The Star

Music? Hark! He threw back his mantle and lifted up his face to the stars. His soul was bathed in a flood of ineffable joy. What was it? Music seemed to be raining from the stars in an exquisite faintness of melody. From beyond the stars, so far and fine it seemed. He listened, his soul and being tense in a quivering agony to hear. Yes, there again and fuller came the sounds, still from beyond the stars. But the very stars seemed nearer, the heavens above had bent closer to the hills as if to take them into their embrace. Again and yet again and ever clearer that falling shower of song filled the air about

The Angel and The Star

him and nearer and nearer came the stars irradiating the night.

The sleeping watchers woke, and startled, rose, stood voiceless and terror-stricken. And now from the parted curtains of heaven a light began to glow brighter than the stars, making a shining pathway to earth and spreading over all the sky till it filled the night with glory ; and down this quivering pathway myriads of shining ones streamed till they filled the earth and the spaces between earth and sky, and still they thronged in the far vanishing spaces of the opened heavens. Ravishing music smote in soft waves upon the ears of the Shep-

The Angel and The Star

herd gazing into this cloud of glory, and filled his soul with a joy fearful and unspeakable. From every side seemed to come those wondrous harmonies, not from the Heavenly choirs alone but from the earth, the trees, the hills, yes, from the very blades of grass. Suddenly, out from the throbbing music a voice broke clear and strong.

“Fear not,” it said, and the Shepherd’s heart grew quiet. “I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people, for to you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.”

The Angel and The Star

At that word there burst from
Heaven a mighty chorus :

“Glory to God, in the highest
On earth peace
Good-will to men.”

Over and over again pealed forth
the mighty chorus in antiphonal re-
frain. Earth from its central depths,
from its hills and valleys, from its rocks
and trees, answering heaven's celestial
choirs. Prone upon their faces fell
the Shepherd and his comrades, faint
with ecstasy of delight. When they
awoke, they said one to the other
“What is this?” and one said “Is it
a vision?”

The Angel and The Star

"It is a dream," answered another.

"It is but a dream."

Then spake the Chief Shepherd,
"Nay, verily, it is no dream, but
Jehovah hath visited His people. Let
us now go even unto Bethlehem and
see this thing that is come to pass,
which the Lord hath made known
unto us."

* * * * *

Already the day was dawning.
Through the break in the eastern hills
a silver light could be seen gleaming
upon the Sea of Judgment far away,
upon the northern Judean hills a faint
flush from the rising sun and over
city and plain the new glory of a

The Angel and The Star

dawning day. But all unheeding the Shepherd hastened homeward in a trance of ecstatic joy and wonder. The great tidings still sounded in his soul. At last the Messiah, Israel's Messiah, had come. After so many ages and generations of passionate yearning and prayer, God had visited His people. And oh wonder of wonders! As a babe! A babe! He thought of his own feeble babe with new tenderness and new reverence, and of the mother that gave him birth. And in a manger! A manger for the Messiah! Why not in a palace? Ah, what palace? Not the gorgeous palace where the monstrous Herod



Page Seventeen.

"BROTHER," HE ENTREATED . . . "I BESEECH THEE HEAR
ME AND GRANT US SOME QUIET SPOT."

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luxuriated in his hideous infamies. After all, a stable was best! He needed no trappings of royalty that earth could give. He brought His glory with Him. A babe! and in a manger! Again he hastened his steps towards his own door. As he drew near a sound from within smote his heart with the chill of the grave. It was the wail for the dead. Like the stab of a sword the contrast pierced his heart. Yonder—joy, peace, life; here—grief, agony, death. He paused, turned and looked back upon the plain behind where the vision had fallen. Once more he saw the open heaven, still he could hear

The Angel and The Star

the ravishing song, "Peace, good-will to men." He was strangely comforted. Earth, its sorrows and its joys seemed small to him who had been gazing into Heaven's glory and listening to Heaven's music and welcoming Heaven's King.

He passed into his home. At his coming the wailing only took a shriller note. With outstretched arms his wife came to him, dreading his agony, fearing for his faith, praying for his submission.

With a single word he silenced the mourners.

"Peace, He is come." Amazed they gazed upon him. Fearful his wife

The Angel and The Star

drew near. Had madness seized him?

“Fear not, but rejoice! The Messiah is come,” he said, his face filled with a wondering exultation and joy. “Death hath no longer power over Life. From Heaven the Prince of Life is come. And with Jehovah are the living forevermore.”

And, standing there, to their astonished ears he told the wondrous story. A babe! a manger! Speechless, afraid and unbelieving, the mourners stole from the house, leaving the two with their dead alone.

Timidly she touched his arm as he stood wrapped in silence. “Tell me,

The Angel and The Star

my lord, can it be true? How can it be?"

"True, dear one? Yea, verily, but how I know not. What we heard and saw that I have told you, and yonder in the stable lies the babe."

The babe! Alive in its mother's arms! Her arms were empty. Quickly her husband gathered her to his heart.

"Dear one, I cannot weep to-day because of the great joy that has come. And even though death has touched our babe, death's victory is gone. They live, they live whom God hath loved. A babe's hand hath opened to me the gates of life. Listen, dear

The Angel and The Star

heart," and once more he told the story of the angel's visit, of the glory and the song, while she wondered till her pain grew less though tears still fell upon the little sleeping face. "And in the stable we found the babe and the mother—and in sore need." A wise word it was.

"Ah," her woman's heart awoke. "May we go to her?" she asked.

"Come," he said.

"Wait for me," she said softly. From a closet in the wall she took the little garments she had made with tender hopes but a few months ago, her tears falling fast

The Angel and The Star

the while, and wrapping them up with some woman's robing she went forth.

"Guard the house," said her husband to the lingering and pitying mourners. "But wail not for the dead to-day."

And so through the still silent streets they went.

At the stable door they found a man.

"May she enter? She has lost her babe."

Quickly the kind face, radiant with light and love, shadowed for an instant but cleared again.

"Jehovah give thee peace," he said.

The Angel and The Star

“ Weep no more for He is come. Enter.”

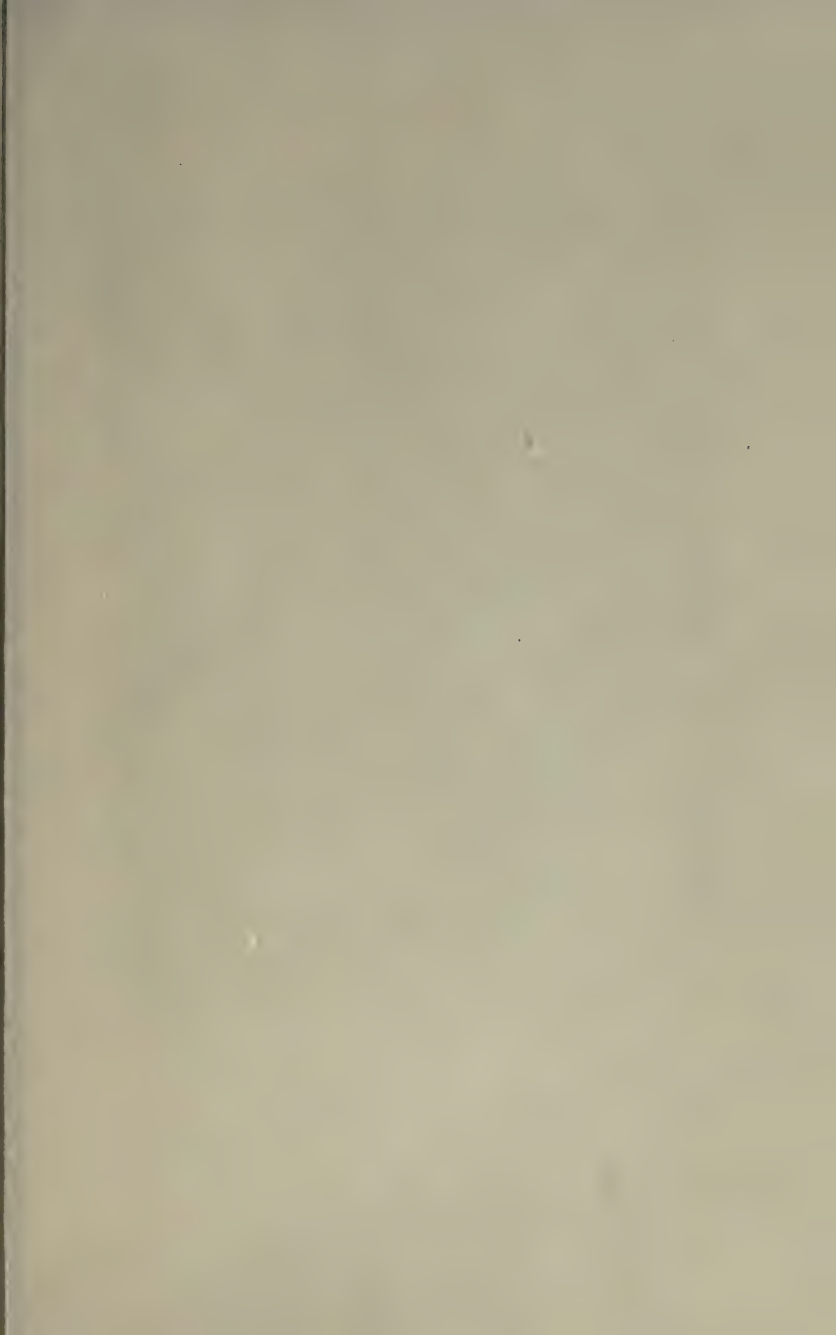
An hour passed while the Shepherd waited, reverent as at the court of the Most Holy Place. Then came forth his wife and put her hand in his.

“Is it well?” he asked simply.

“It is well,” she replied. And he needed no more for Jehovah’s peace lay like a light upon her face.

And so they passed back to their home with the angel’s song chanting itself through their hearts, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will towards men.”

For where the Christ comes death hath no more dominion for ever.





Page Forty-three.

"NO NEED OF GUIDE, FOR ONCE FREE OF THE CITY STEADILY
BURNED BEFORE THEM A WONDROUS STAR."

THE STAR



THE city of Jerusalem was troubled, was deeply troubled. Through its crowded streets had run a rumour that had kindled to flame the national Messianic hopes. A distinguished embassy from a far East land had come two nights ago, upon a strange quest. They had come seeking a King. At first men had laughed, but the grave majesty of the strangers, and the costly trappings of their caravan had changed the laughter

The Angel and The Star

to serious attention, and before the first night had gone, the streets and markets, the bazaars and wineshops were thrilling with the news. From the street to the Palace the rumour had run, and Herod himself, at first scornful, had deigned to summon the travellers to his presence. To-day at early dawn a strange thing had happened. The Great Council had been called by the King. That Idumean usurper, uncertain of his throne, hated by his people, despised by the noble families as an upstart, loathed by the priests as an apostate, trembled at every breath of Messianic enthusiasm, at every suggestion of a rival. He

The Angel and The Star

had shown his fear by summoning the Great Council. This whole day had they been in session. Jerusalem was well-nigh mad with anxiety.

The appearance of a Messianic Leader, the sounding of one clear Messianic cry through these streets and Jerusalem would run with blood. No wonder Jerusalem was troubled. What would the next hour bring? In tense fear they waited. What would come forth from that fortress Palace?

Night was falling, when from the gorgeous Palace gates came forth the Embassy from the East, travel-worn but stately, and following them the Council. In a moment from lip to

The Angel and The Star

lip ran the word, that nothing need be feared. And all Jerusalem, the light-hearted, gay, fiercely religious, cosmopolitan city, relaxed itself in scornful laughter at its recent panic. What fools they had been ! A few foolish astrologers had seen a star in the East and had guessed a King was to be born. What accursed folly was this ? But what could you expect of these Gentile dogs, and worshippers of idols ?

And now they were gone seeking their King in Bethlehem ! In Bethlehem ! as if a King could there be born and Jerusalem and its wise and learned Scribes be unaware. And Jerusalem turned to its bargaining and sacrific-

The Angel and The Star

ing, its praying and its wine drinking much relieved.

In due time that strange caravan had reached the terraced hills of Bethlehem. No need of guide, for once free of the city steadily burned before them a wondrous star.

Bethlehem was puzzled. Whence came these strange men? And who was that majestic figure in command? The rabble gathered about them. At the Inn they paused.

Their leader of kingly carriage and of patriarchal mien gave command. The beasts were unburdened, and from the load one hamper was selected and brought near.

The Angel and The Star

The innkeeper with obsequious hospitality offered shelter and refreshment. But the little company drew together and talked.

“How shall we make approach?” said one. “Who will bring us to Him?” Then after some grave and earnest deliberation, their leader turned to the innkeeper.

“Can we find one to present us to the King?” he asked in the Hebrew tongue.

“The King?” said the innkeeper.
“What King?”

“The King of the Jews.”

“Nay,” laughed the innkeeper scornfully, “he lives not in so humble

The Angel and The Star

a place as Bethlehem, though yonder is a palace he has built. In Jerusalem you will find the King of the Jews, not here."

"Nay, friend," the leader answered with grave dignity, "He is here, born, and yonder is His star."

"His star!" cried the innkeeper. "Now Jehovah defend us. Thou art mad. Whence art ye?"

"From the rising sun. Many weeks have we travelled seeking this King, for we saw the rising of His star in the East long months ago."

"His star? Are ye then of those who follow such accursed vanities and worship the abominations of the

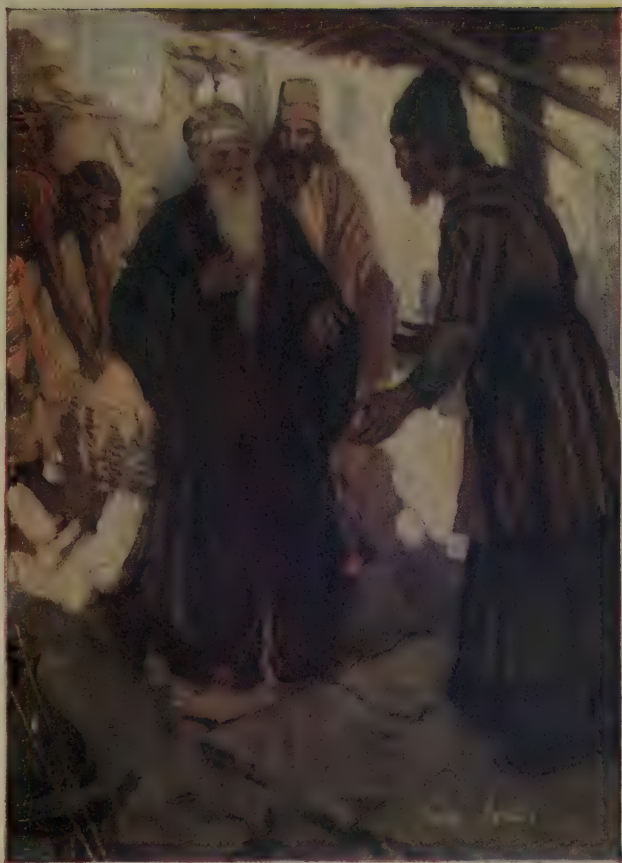
The Angel and The Star

heathen? If so, there is no place for ye in my inn."

"Nay, we worship God," reverently replied the stranger with unruffled calm, "and would fain to do homage to His messenger, the King of the Jews, whose star we have followed from Jerusalem to this place."

"King of the Jews?" impatiently replied the innkeeper. "Here, Shepherd," he called to the Chief Shepherd of the sacrificial flock who was passing to his nightly watch, "thou art skilled in these matters. What means this folly of the stars?"

The Shepherd turned to the Man of the East and gravely saluted him.



Page Forty-four.

"CAN WE FIND ONE TO PRESENT US TO THE KING?" HE
ASKED IN THE HEBREW TONGUE.

The Angel and The Star

“Jehovah give thee peace. What wouldst thou?”

“We come seeking the King of the Jews, for in a land far from this we saw, many months ago, the rising of His star, and we have come to do Him homage. But no man can we find who can give us guiding to His presence, not even Herod.”

“Herod!” exclaimed the Shepherd scornfully. “Sought ye a King from that usurper?”

“Hush,” said the innkeeper, glancing about upon the crowd. “Thou art mad to speak thus in the street.”

“But,” continued the Man of the East, “His Council directed us to

The Angel and The Star

Bethlehem, saying it was there the King was to be born."

"Born!" said the Shepherd quickly.

"Yea, and as we left the city His star appeared again, and lo ! there it stands over that house before us. But we have none to bring us fittingly to Him."

The Shepherd stood silent as in a great maze, looking at the luminous star that hung low over the house. "Truly this is wonderful," he said slowly, "for in that house abides a Babe with its mother at whose birth strange things came to pass. But how came ye to hear?"

"Yonder is His star," calmly said the Man from the East.

The Angel and The Star

“His star ! what has He to do with stars ?”

“Ay, verily and so said I,” interrupted the innkeeper. “These be cursed and unclean worshippers of the host of heaven.”

“Nay, friend, we worship God and seek His anointed, the King of the Jews. Knowest thou this mother and this Babe ?” he said to the Shepherd.

“I know the Babe and the mother ; come,” and he led them to the house where the young Child was and departed to his nightly watch deeply musing. Truly mystery deepened about this Babe. How wonderful that these Gentiles in their far coun-

The Angel and The Star

try should have come to know of Him! How wonderful they should have found their way to Bethlehem! Their story of the Star meant little to the Shepherd. For him the stars had no message, and yet as he stood upon his lonely hillside gazing upward at the splendid pageant of the night the words of his ancestor the Poet-King came to him :

“ When I consider Thy Heavens,
The moon and the stars that Thou didst
ordain !
What is man that Thou art mindful of him,
And the son of man that Thou visitest
him ! ”

Never again would the old doubts
harass him. That night of glorious

The Angel and The Star

vision had changed all things. Jehovah had visited His people. Heaven with its stars, Earth with its peoples would henceforth seem nearer to him and dearer and Jehovah would forever seem his Friend. An hour passed when the fretful voice of the innkeeper roused him.

“Hither, Shepherd, and relieve me of this mad star-gazer, for he would take no rest nor give me any till I had brought him to thee.”

“Be at peace, friend,” said the Man of the East, placing a piece of gold in his hand. “Now go.”

The tone and gesture of command struck the innkeeper dumb, and mur-

The Angel and The Star

muring a word of thanks, he hastily retired, leaving the two upon the starlit hillside together.

“ Listen, my brother,” said the Man from the East, “ for I would speak with thee, and I cannot rest till I know what my heart craves.” He paused, then said abruptly, “ Tell me of this Babe ; of His birth.”

The Shepherd hesitated. “ Why should I tell thee ? thou art not of Israel.”

“ Thou hast truly spoken, yet shouldst thou tell me.”

“ And wherefore ? ”

“ For two reasons. Thou knowest thy law concerning the stranger ? ”

The Angel and The Star

The Shepherd bowed assent. "I am a stranger and in deep need." Touched by the pathetic dignity of that simple appeal the Shepherd took his hand in sympathy. "And further, if this Babe indeed be Messiah to Israel then surely He is to more than Israel. Else what mean these words of thine ancient prophets, 'In Him shall the Gentiles trust,' and again, 'They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before Him.' If He be thy Messiah, then to-night is this Scripture fulfilled."

The Shepherd pondered. "Surely thou art no worshipper of false gods."

"Nay; I worship God," simply interposed the Man of the East.

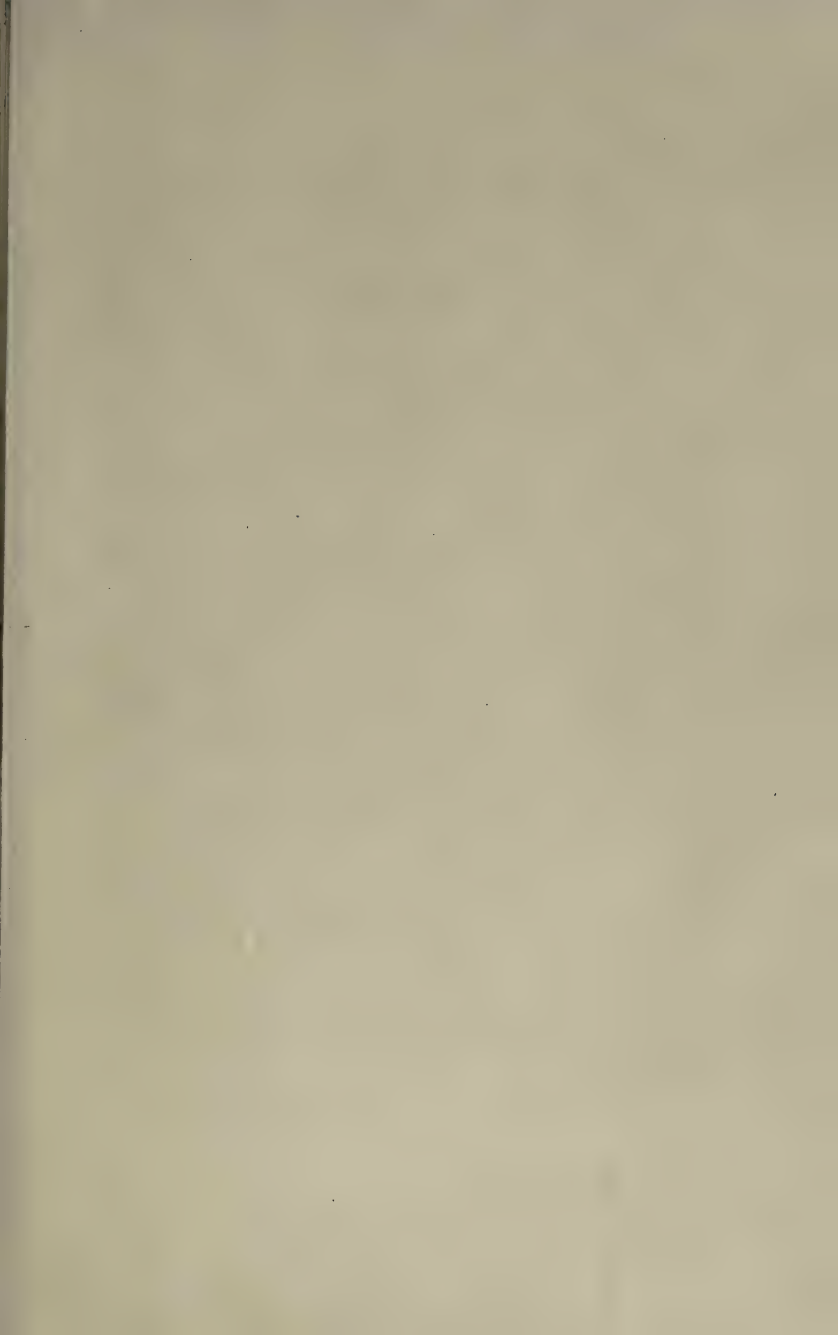
The Angel and The Star

“And more,” continued the Shepherd, as if to himself, “the song said ‘Good-will to men.’”

“Tell me,” entreated the stranger, his proud face softened by pain to humility, “for my heart is heavy from long years of agony.”

But the age-long Jewish hate and jealous scorn of the Gentile held the Shepherd silent. To speak of Israel’s Messiah to this alien and worshipper of stars, to him seemed sacrilege.

“Let me tell thee my story,” said the Man of the East at length, “perhaps then thy hard heart shall melt.” And to the shuddering ears of the Shepherd, he told a tale of sin and





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"AND NOW WE HAVE DONE OUR HOMAGE AND OFFERED
OUR GIFTS."

The Angel and The Star

lust and blood and treachery so terrible that it seemed to defile the very night.

“Then when I had drunk the dregs, my heart within me woke and cried for vengeance till I grew mad with desperate remorse. In vain I offered sacrifices upon the altars of the gods; in vain I poured forth treasure at the bidding of their priests. Deeply I studied, many lands I travelled seeking peace, but ever that cry of vengeance night and day echoed through the spaces of my soul till life became one long agony. The mysteries of our religion I mastered, the wisdom of the heavens I searched but

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found no help. At length to the wisest and the best of the priesthood of our land I went, an old man who lived remote from the world's fevers and ambitions, its joys and griefs. I told him my story. Swift was his answer: 'What thou lovest best, offer that to God and thou shalt find peace.' Like a sword in my bones was that word, for I had but one son, a beautiful youth. I turned away from the priest with my sin and my agony upon me. Vainly I sought escape! Vainly I sought peace! Then I remembered thy Abraham, and, for the sin of my soul, I offered the fruit of my body. Ah! My son!

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My son! But even that sacrifice availed not. From that high altar I came down cursing the gods of my people, and determined that I should seek no longer peace in life but death. That night, as I swept the heavens in my last study of the mysteries, my eye caught the rising of a star of wondrous light and beauty. As if from Heaven a voice cried, 'Follow where I lead,' and faint hope trembled in my heart. I knew that somewhere a Great One was to be born who might have help for me. But where? All books I studied in the light of my knowledge of the stars, till in thy sacred books I read thus of thy com-

The Angel and The Star

ing King. 'The Gentiles shall come to thy light and kings to the brightness of thy rising.' And again, 'From the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same My name shall be great among the Gentiles, and in every place incense shall be offered unto My name and a peace offering, for My name shall be great among the heathen, saith Jehovah of hosts.' I obeyed the leading of the Star, and following, we have found Him. And now we have done our homage and offered our gifts. But still my heart's anguish is unappeased. The King has come truly whose Kingdom shall rule over all Kingdoms. But what of my sin?"

The Angel and The Star

The Shepherd was deeply moved at the marvellous and terrible story.

“Said she naught of sins?” he asked.

“Nay, we spoke little. In a King’s presence we are silent. But if thou hast aught to tell, send me not back unhelped, for my sin is more than I can bear.” The agony in his face touched the Shepherd’s heart. He forgot his Jewish prejudice. “Listen,” he said, and told the story of the angels and the song.

With eager face the stranger listened, deeply anxious, deeply perplexed. When the tale was done there was long silence, then the Man of the

The Angel and The Star

East spoke. "Good-will to men! a Saviour! Good! But Angels! I know naught of them!"

"Nor I of stars."

A light began to break upon the swarthy face of the Man of the East. "Oh," he cried aloud, "but thee an Angel and me a Star led to the King. Praised be God!"

Then after long musing he spake with trembling voice, "Oh, my brother! can it be—thinkest thou—can there be with God for the sinful—peace?"

"Yea verily. It is written 'with Thee there is forgiveness that Thou mayest be feared.'"

The Angel and The Star

“ But how ? ”

“ By confession and sacrifice,” the Shepherd had almost answered, but remembering the stranger’s terrible story he hesitated, then said “ Hope thou in Jehovah.”

“ In Jehovah ! ” replied the stranger sadly, “ thy God ! ”

“ Verily and the God of this Babe.”

“ Ah ! the King of the Jews ! ”

“ Yea ! and ‘ in Him shall the Gentiles trust. ’ ”

The stranger stood long silent gazing across the hills at the wondrous Star. Then he took the Shepherd’s hand. “ Jehovah thy God bless thee,” he said, his voice vibrating and deep.

The Angel and The Star

“In Jehovah and in His King there is hope. I shall try to be content.”

“Jehovah give thee peace,” replied the Shepherd.

Then they parted.

“Stay,” said the Shepherd. The stranger turned. “Spoke the mother the name of the Babe?”

“Yea. It is Jeshua.”

“Knowest thou how it was given?”

“Nay.”

“An Angel said, ‘He should save His people from their sins.’”

The dark faced man drew near. “Tell me again,” he entreated with trembling lips. “What said the Angel?”



Page Slaty-one.

"JEHOVAH THY GOD BLESS THEE," HE SAID, HIS VOICE
VIBRATING AND DEEP.

The Angel and The Star

“Thou shalt call His name Jeshua, for He shall save His people from their sins.”

Then broke the stranger's proud reserve. The fountain of his tears was broken up. He turned towards the Star, and prostrating himself, he worshipped. Then with reverent grace he kissed the Shepherd, weeping, and went his way.

“Is it peace?” spake the Shepherd after him.

“It is peace!” came back from the star-lit darkness, and gazing at the Star the Shepherd wondered and bowed his head and worshipped.

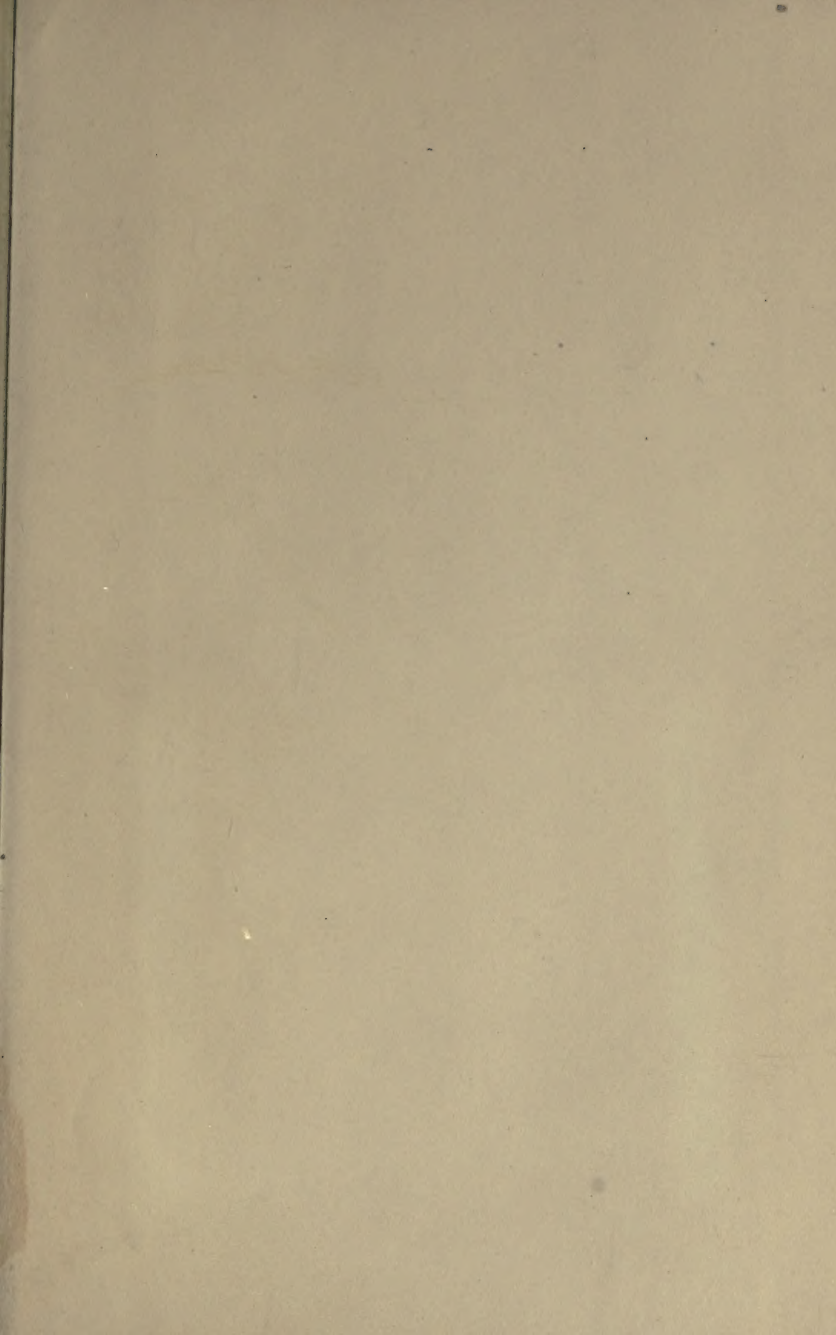
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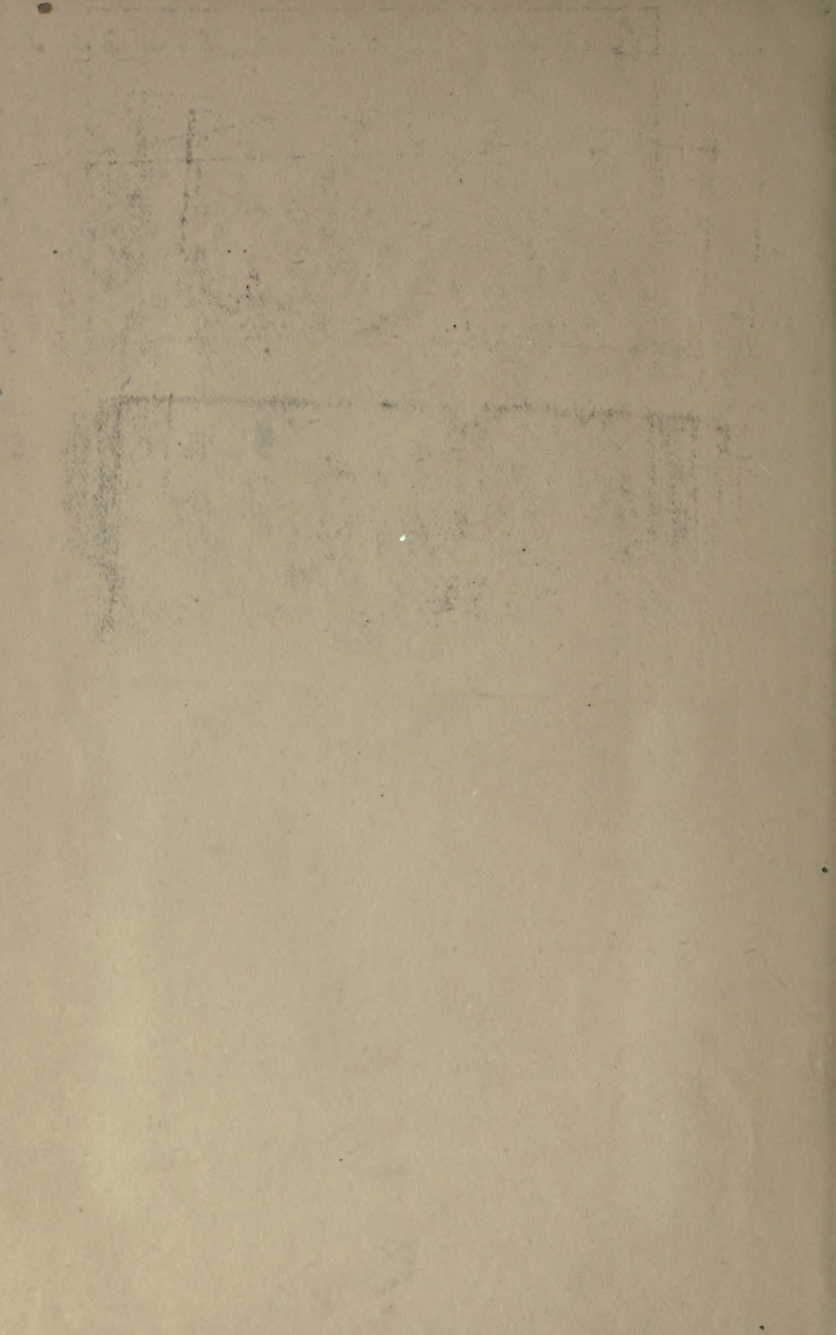
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